



NEWS RELEASE

Tennessee Regulatory Authority

Media Contact:

Dr. Eddie Roberson
Chief, Consumer Services &
External Affairs Division
(615) 741-2904 Ext. 158

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TRA Accepts Settlement Agreement: Lifeline and Link Up Telephone Assistance Programs Expanded

Nashville, Tennessee – The Tennessee Regulatory Authority (TRA) today approved a settlement agreement between the TRA Staff and BellSouth that will improve the accessibility to and awareness of the “Lifeline” and “Link Up” telephone assistance programs statewide.

The Lifeline and Link Up programs were established to ensure the availability of affordable telephone service for low income consumers. Link Up assists consumers by paying one-half of the installation charges (up to a maximum of \$30.00) for new telephone service, while Lifeline pays up to \$13.50 per month towards the local portion of the telephone bill.

As part of today’s settlement, BellSouth has agreed to expand the Lifeline and Link Up eligibility criteria to include the National School Free Lunch Program, Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8), and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

In addition, BellSouth has agreed to streamline the application process for qualified applicants to receive Lifeline and Link Up and to set aside \$45,000 over a three year period to fund a consumer education campaign to increase awareness of the two assistance programs.

The settlement agreement stems from BellSouth’s failure to meet certain performance measurements related to its provision of wholesale services to competitive providers.

“There are many within our State who cannot afford basic telephone service,” said TRA Chairman Ron Jones. “Lifeline and Link Up was established with these individuals in mind. This is good news for our low income citizens.”

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